

Sunday July 19th ~ Trinity 6: Matthew 13.24-30,36-43

Welcome to Praying Together but Separately

Gathering Before God

Make sure you are sitting comfortably.

I am in the presence of the Living God, Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer of the Day

Merciful God, you have prepared for those who love you

such good things as pass our understanding:

pour into our hearts such love toward you

that we, loving you in all things and above all things,

may obtain your promises,

which exceed all that we can desire;

through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,

who is alive and reigns with you,

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Reflection

Breathe slowly and deeply.

Ask God to speak to you through the passage that you are about to read.

Bible Reading: Matthew 13.24-30,36-43

Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

“The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from? ‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

“As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

Read through the passage once. Read it quietly out loud but say each word out loud.

Try and take note of any words or phrases that strike you.

Say that word or phrase quietly out loud or underline it with a pen.

Read the passage a second time.

As you read, think about how the word or phrase you notice might speak to you today.

After you have read the passage again, sit in silence and try and come up with a sentence or two that sums up what you think the word or phrase means for you today.

Read the passage a third time and prayerfully think about what Christ has said to you.

Some thoughts for further Reflection:

In the Gospel today we hear again how Jesus spoke to the people in parables. We hear how Jesus explains the full meaning of the parable to some of the disciples. Matthew is explaining to the early church some of the teachings of Jesus.

For the early church, as it was in the time of Jesus, there was a clear understanding of how the Kingdom of God was at war with all that caused evil in the world and was personalised in the devil, the author and bringer of evil – the evil one.

In the minds of the early church, just as there were followers of Jesus, the people of the kingdom, there were others who were followers of the devil, people of the evil one. The early Christians were taught that there would come a day of judgement, the harvest, when all that was evil would be destroyed, a day when the words of the Magnificat (Mary’s great song of praise and justice – Luke 1 v46-55) would be fulfilled. On that day the children of the kingdom would be filled with shining joy in the Father’s Kingdom.

In our time we might want to consider the understanding of the early church that evil and sin is not simply an accident but a design which has a cause outside the human heart - what St Paul calls ‘principles and powers’. How does this understanding sit with our thinking about our own lives and some of the things we experience in the world today?

The words of Jesus “let both grow together until the harvest” would perhaps ask us to consider the need for the people of the Kingdom to sometimes be patient with themselves and with each other. The Christian heart until to the end of time will be full of weeds and full of wheat, hopefully more wheat than weeds with the growing of the years. The weeds, while they might be evil, might also be human frailty and weakness.

Sometimes the desire and the pursuit to remove the weeds from our lives can end up with us failing to recognize the wheat, that which is good within us. A dysfunctional pursuit to remove all the weeds at once can cause a lot of harm to us and to the lives of others and a lack of forgiveness. It might also be true that sometimes the weeds and the wheat need to grow together so that at the right time the wheat can be distinguished from the weeds. This is not possible when the wheat and the weeds are seeds and are sprouting. Some kinds of anger, for example, are wheat and other kinds are weeds and often it is only time which shows which is good and which is not. For example, righteous anger that demands God’s justice and sinful anger that is resentful and wills harm on another.

The refining fire of God at the end of time will remove all the weeds of the heart. God gently kneels down in our hearts today and at the end of time pulls the weeds out very gently, shaking the earth loose so as not to lose anything good and so as not to disturb the growing wheat.

How does this parable help you understand your own heart?

Creative Prayer activity for at home

On your own, or with your household.

Take a walk in a garden, a street, or a park. Find and look very intensely for few moments at weeds and then do the same with a flower or flowers growing.

Ask the Lord God to bring forth flowers of beauty and generosity in your heart and not weeds.

Maybe then pick or buy a flower today and place it where you can look at it each day and continue to make this request to the Lord your God throughout the week.

OUR PRAYERS

God of the Harvest, grant me and your whole church throughout your world the hearts and lives that are growing a harvest of wheat and not weeds.

Kindly God, gently kneel down in our heart today and at the end of time pull the weeds out gently, shaking the earth loose so that nothing that is good and of you is lost.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Grant to me God, and to all your people, the wisdom and the will through your great love of me to be the wheat, the people of your Kingdom and not of the weeds, this day and always.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Father I pray for all who are caught up in corruption and decay.

Forgive us where we destroy and mar your world through greed.

I pray for areas where forests are being destroyed, the soil eroded, the water polluted.

Guide by your Spirit all who groan for a better world, all who seek to restore and renew the earth. (prayer by David Adams )

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer.**

Healing Christ, I pray for the sick, the weary and those who are troubled,

praying particularly for all those who are affected in different ways by the coronavirus: those tired through work, those who have lost work, those who are physically ill,

those who are struggling mentally,

those who are lost and have little hope.

I name those I know in my heart now to you.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Lord of the Harvest, your saints and angels in heaven and on earth sing your praise echoing throughout the universe the sound of your love,

welcome and embrace in your kingdom all who have died and yet remain in our hearts.

Bless them as you bless me as I speak their names to you in my heart.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Holy Spirit travel with me this day and in the days of this week in ways I can understand so that I can travel in your footsteps. Amen

A prayer concerning the Coronavirus

God of compassion,
be close to those who are ill, afraid or in isolation.
in their loneliness, be their consolation;
in their anxiety, be their hope;
in their darkness, be their light;
through him who suffered alone on the cross,
but reigns with you in glory,
Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

An act of spiritual Communion

My Jesus,
I believe that You
are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love You above all things,
and I desire to receive You into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment
receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You.

Never permit me to be separated from You. **Amen.**

The Lord’s Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;**

**thy kingdom come; thy will be done;**

**on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread.**

**And forgive us our trespasses,**

**as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation;** **but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,**

**the power and the glory,** **for ever and ever.** **Amen.**